

# Chapter 1

## EARLY HISTORY OF MOMENCE - 1934

By Walter A. Brown

A little history of Momence, Illinois by Walter A. Brown who was born and raised here and lived his life until about fifteen years ago and who now lives at Fair Oaks, California. He was born Sept. 16, 1860, at the Brown home at 203 Pine Street, Momence. He lived there practically sixty years. As you folks of the old town of Momence, Illinois are to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the place with jollification and merry-making with old friends and home-comers, and as the third and last day of the celebration, the sixteenth, is my birthday I feel it a privilege and a duty to try and do my part as near as I can and as I can't be there, as much as I would like to be, for I am sure I would have the pleasure to see many and shake hands with them that I shall never have the chance to see again.

Momence practically started up the river about where the home of the late Silas Metcalf lived and which is now owned by his foster son, Neil Metcalf. However, a few years later the water power and mill dams were located farther down the river, for it was a better place for the dam. There was one dam built across the river at the head of the Island and the other was at the mills which were down farther, but today there is a dam little to show where this dam was. To be exact it crossed the river from the Island about two hundred feet west of the old mill house that still stands on Island Park and was bought by Oscar Conrad a few years ago and remodeled and made into his home which later sold to F.W. Weber. For a number of years it was a nine foot dam and on the Island was built a fine three-story and basement frame grist mill which was painted red with four run of stone, it was owned and operated for many years but a man named John Strunk and after his death it was run by his son, William Strunk, who passed away about thirty years ago. For many years it was the only mill in this part of the country south of Chicago for miles. It was nothing for people in those days to come forty miles to the Momence mill. In the winter I have seen a shed one-hundred feet

long, open only on the south, full of teams that were put in out of the weather and fed while the owners waited to have their grist ground. Many times on a Saturday many were obliged to be outside. It was a busy place, especially in the winter, when they had plenty of water, they kept and fed lots of hogs (but don't know whose corn they fed them.) On the north side of the river was a large saw mill, planing mill and wood turning and a wool carding plant. In the winter they would bring in logs on sleds and wagons and in the summer men would go up the river and cut great quantities of logs and bring them down the river in large rafts to the mill pond where they would pull them up a slide into the mills as they needed them and would saw them into lumber. The long narrow strip of land along the north bank from about where the Momence town hall is up to about where the Riker home stands, used to be pretty well covered with logs and sawed lumber consisting of oak, maple, ash, walnut, birch and elm. Any other lumber was to be hauled by team from Kankakee and often it took two days to get a load thru with the bad roads we used to have in those days. All dry goods, groceries, etc., had to be hauled at first from Chicago until the Illinois Central Railroad was built. My parents, when they came to Momence in the fall of 1850, had to come from Chicago to Momence by wagon (some difference now you can almost come to Momence from Chicago while you were getting a team harnessed and hitched up ready to start in those days because you had to carry your feed for both yourself and team.) Those days and even back sixty-five years ago there was not many people in Momence, and they were all poor people, but no disgrace even at that. I will try to locate some of the homes of some of the older families of those days which are practically all gone now. I will commence in the east part of the town and work west about the time or a little later than the building of the grist and saw mills. There was a distillery built about four or five blocks east of the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad depot and it was operated for a number of years, and from all reports considerable money was made out of the manufacturing and sale of liquor and the feeding of cattle and hogs, but this firm went out of business long before the mill did. I can barely remember the last years that it operated. The only building left of that outfit is a dwelling house now owned and occupied by Mrs. Mott Reynolds. I believe her father was one of the stockholders in the distillery. Another old-time home was just a block east of the

depot and was occupied for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Pat McAller, Mrs. William Haslett's parents. A red brick house along the south side of the N.Y.C. track was owned and occupied as long ago I can remember by Mr. and Mrs. Willis Lyons and he owned and operated a lime kiln east of his home in the same block for many years; the only lime kiln in miles. I think his property is still in the family and is owned by Mrs. Ira Metcalf. Just across the track north of the Lyons house was the home of old Mr. Patterson, the grandfather of Mrs. Bertha Durham. Then coming west thru what used to be called "Shanty Town" was the homes of Mr. Stephen Hughes, Mr. Chris Halpin, and Mr. Thomas Sweeney. Then we come to the home of the Rev. Elder Burr one of the best men that ever lived a Methodist at that. He married the people, baptized their children, made their coffins, and buried them. He used to own the whole block where Mr. and Mrs. Sam W. Calkins live, and the house just north of the Calkin's residence, and a story and a half house was Mr. and Mrs. Burr's home and he had his shop north of his home where he made coffins. It was quite a large building and faced the street on the west and he had for his sign over the front door a black walnut coffin. He had a son named Charles and a daughter Mary. Across the street west of Mr. Burr's house was the home of Mr. Elof Wheeler, father of Steve Wheeler and Mrs. Mott Reynolds. It was bought and made the home for many years by the late Mr. and Mrs. Longpre, and is still owned by their daughter, Mrs. Bertha Thomas. Down the street south from there a block was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Kendall, a lawyer, and still a block farther across the street was the Momence school house, a two story, red brick building. South of that in the same block was the home of the late Emos Van Kirk, the father of the late Mrs. Anna Buntain and Henry Van Kirk, Jr. Across the street west was the home of the late William Patterson, father of Mrs. Bertha Durham, and across the street east on the corner was the home of Mr. Silas Davis, next south of that where Mrs. Sophia Willis lives is one of the oldest houses and use to stand where the late W.P. Watson's home is, and was the home of Mr. Shedd, Mr. Watson's father-in-law. The next home south of Mrs. Willis' was the home of an old gentleman named Kurtz. I think he was a wood turner at the saw mill. Next south on the corner was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Schoof; going back east two blocks where Mr. Clyde Tabler lives used to be a very old house owned by Mr. and Mrs. Green. Mr. Green died before I can remember

and left his widow and three sons, elder son, John, started the Island Park News. Across the road south from the Green house was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Owles, who built the first bakery in Momence and ran it for a number of years. It is the building used by Mrs. M.H. Sweet as a millinery store. South of Mr. Owles home in the same block were the Ricker home stands was the home of a very old maid Amie Hatsel, who resided there for years. Across the street east from there where the home of the late Dr. H.M. Keyser stands was the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Moore. He bought the marble slabs and made the gravestones for the people. In those days he was quite a noted weather prophet. Going west a block was the home of the late Hiram Wilber, owned now I believe by L. Shaffer. Mr. Wilber was a merchant in Momence for many years. He had one son, Neb Wilber now living in Chicago. Across the road was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Slocum Wilber, brother of Hiram Wilber, another mighty fine couple. I think they built the red brick house where they made their home as long as I can remember. He owned a one-fourth block, where he lived. The land across the street was built for a hitch-barn about twenty-five years ago. Here Mr. Wilber had two large seed houses, one four stories and the other two stories high, where he cured and put up garden seed. For years he raised garden seed for the New York market. He owned a number of pieces of good land in and around Momence. At one time he owned the block now occupied by the Momence High School. He used to grow his onion and beet seed there. A five acre tract west of the edge of town, adjoining Mr. Frank Turrell's. Here he used to grow parsnips and radish seeds. And the forty acres west of the late Mr. Fred Knighthart home he used to grow garden peas and cucumber seed. Besides these he had many acres out in the country where he raised pepper seed and also Hubbard squash seed. He employed lots of help all summer, mostly men and boys, and in the fall when he harvested the cucumber crop he had men, women, boys and girls working for him, scraping cucumbers. It was a nasty job but paid well. My brother and I earned as high as \$7.00 a day, when dollars were as large as cartwheels. A greater part of the people had Mr. Wilber to thank for the start they got in early life in Momence. Placid Sharkey and Mr. William Sweeney were early time straw bosses. Placid used to drive the oxen and haul out the manure and haul in the seeds and squash. Mr. Sweeney used to drive the old gray mare when she was what she used to be and nobody could ride

her. Many times I have seen Jeddi Taylor, Placid Sharkey, Frank Schampeay, and Alfred Taylor, (who had two thumbs on one hand), thrashing out seed on a large canvas out in the field with the flail, one of which Mr. Wilbur gave to me as a relic after he went out of the business. I later gave this with other things to the Kankakee County Collection in charge at that time was Dr. Uran. About the time Mr. Wilber was at the highest point in raising seed a large seed company in New York went broke and Mr. Wilber lost many thousands of dollars. It practically broke Mr. Wilber although he paid all his help and debts and it left him a poor but highly honored man. I never knew anyone to see Mr. Wilber angry and he always had a friendly and kind word for all. In the same block and north of the Wilber home is the home of the late W.D. Lane and his widow, the oldest lady in this part of the country. She still lives there. Next, north of the Lane home was one of our first doctors, Mr. Ellis. In the southwest corner of the same block is a fine home built by a Mr. Thomas Hamilton, who for several years he ran the grist mill but later sold his home to the late Marcus Atherton, who for many years conducted a hardware and implement business, a block farther south on the corner of River Street. The home is now owned by Mr. Mose Searls. East of the Atherton store and Wilber seed warehouse is one of the oldest houses. Another mill house belonging to the saw mill and later owned and occupied by the late John Paradis. Across the road from that and a little farther west is a small dwelling (I don't know who owns it now) but it was built and owned by the late Zeno Goodell for a photo gallery and jewelry store. Next west is the oldest store building in the place. When I can first remember it was occupied by Worcester and Brayton as a general store for many years. Later on they built a three story stone building on the corner of River and Range Street, now Dixie Highway, which burned down six or eight years ago. The old store building is still in use and stands east of the White Star Laundry. Next to that is the site of the first blacksmith and wagon-making shop, a two story stone building that was built by Bump and Bondle, and was operated by them for years. Later on by Mr. Cornelius Bradley, and still later on and up to the time it burned by Mr. Phillips, a brother of the late Dr. D.S. Phillips, of Kankakee. The next building where West's have a poultry business was built about eighty years ago by Mr. Abe Griswold, where he manufacture corn cultivators for many years, and the next west where the Sherwood bottling works now stands (If that

building could only talk what a book it would take to hold all its history.) It was the first Ganeer school house, for many years called the White school house, and was built on the block east of where St. Pat's Academy is, and used there until after the present Central house building was erected, was sold and moved to the present location, was later repaired and used by the Episcopal people for several years as a chapel until they built the present Church of the Good Shepherd. Across the street north of there for a half block, nearly facing south, was where William Patterson ran a large business for several years. These buildings have been gone for years. On the northwest corner of this block where the present Momence hotel stands used to be a three story red brick lodging house and saloon; it burned down one very cold Sunday night about 9 o'clock. No fire engine in those days, only a bucket brigade. While it burnt to the ground a very laughable thing happened in the excitement of saving the contents which was told for years after of the late James H. Lloyd and Ed Kendall, young men in those days, of them throwing a wood stove and a looking glass out of the third story window and carrying down a feather bed, (the bed was not hurt.) Going farther north a block was another very old house owned by a family named Burns, but was torn down I think by the Wennerholm Brothers. North of that, across the road, was the home of the late John Looker, father of County Surveyor L.L. Looker, and next to that where Mrs. A. Hupp lives was the house of the late J. Scramlin and where Charles Styles' home is used to stand the home of Jim Bam; next north of that was the old First Baptist Church. It used to have a very high three story tower and a weather vane on the top of the spire. The tower got unsafe and was torn down some fifty years ago. Going north a block and a half we come to the home of the late William Chatfield that used to stand right across the street from the Central school building. This was another one of Momence's oldest homes. Mr. Chatfield was the father of the late James Chatfield, Martha Kendall and Jane Osby. Two blocks north of there was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Barney Dedman, son and two daughters, all have passed on. Across the street west and south a block and a half and we come to the Methodist parsonage. A block south and the Methodist Church which replaces the old stone Church. On the southeast corner of the same block was what was called the Shrontz tavern, was owned and operated by the late John Shrontz. It burnt down once and was replaced by the present building

occupied by Mrs. Julia Campbell and daughter, Magdalene. Farther south one half block is a one story red building erected by a man named Buffington, father of the late Lafayette Buffington. On the corner south where the present Beier Bros. garage, used to be a long one story framed house, for years occupied by a German family named Lowder. I think he was connected with the saw mill and wood turning plant as the late John Deerson used to manufacture bedsteads there. Next south of that where Dr. E.G. Gibson now has his office used to be the home of one Pascal Bolduc, now deceased. Then we come to the present home of Mrs. Josephine Graham; this house is about 66 or 70 years old, and has been her home ever since it was built. Mr. Graham ran a livery barn south of it in the same block for years; it burned down twice and was rebuilt with brick the last time. Next comes the First National Bank building that occupies the ground once owned by the late Dr. Clark and was the office of Momence's first paper, the Reporter. The paper was started by a man named Ed Paradis who sold out to Mr. Clark who published it until his death. Across the street south on the corner, set back about forty feet from main street, was the home of John Marshall, father of the late Frank Marshall, and next to it was his saloon which he ran for many years, selling out and going up into the Beaver Lake country on a farm. The building was later used by the late W.J. Dixon who conducted a bakery and restaurant many years, replacing the old stand with the present one. The old three-story brick building on the corner was built before I can remember and the hall on the third floor has been the meeting place of many important events in its day was built by the Worcester's and Dr. Lane, who owned and operated a drug store in the north store and lived on the second floors and Mr. J.B. Worcester, first husband of the late Mrs. Frank Hamilton, ran a drug store in the south room for years until both parties passed on. The Worcester's store was sold to the late W.G. Nichols and E. S. Cooke and the Lane store was sold to the late AA Culver and Scott Parish. Across the street south on the corner was a store owned and run by the late J.B. Wickes, father of Mrs. Ida Shrontz. The building west of the store was run as a tavern and called the Woolworth block. Next west was the first and only cooper shop in the place, a frame building two stories, and the siding on the same was of black walnut wood. My father owned this building and rented it to a Mr. Beargard who operated the cooper shop there for many years, selling out to a man named

Croman, the father of the late Brady Croman. Father owned the land running west up to the city jail and here he had his machine shop for nearly 60 years, up to the time of his death. At one time, fifty years ago, when apples were plentiful in this country, he operated a merchant cider mill and press, turning out 60,000 and 75,000 gallons of cider in the season. Across the road north in what is now the east part of the Cleary cottage was a Mr. and Mrs. White, home people from Virginia. Going north a block and a half was a two room house owned by a man named Agen, a butcher. North of that next to the alley was a story and a half log house; the last people that lived in it (before they built the Miller cottage) was Seth Wells. Going north one-half block was a small four room house-here was where the late Charles B. Astle was born. The house on the corner just north of this was owned by the late William Perkins, was built by Cornelius Bradley who used to own and operate the old stone shop where the Progress building now stands. A man named Teaple built and owned the building across the road north on the corner, selling later to Mr. Mosley, later he sold it to the late A. Faucher, who for many years did the draying in Momence, and on the northwest corner of the block in the present house, used to live a family named Smith. There were several boys-Charlie, Fred and Otto. Two of the boys used to hold good positions on the C & E I Railroad. A block north and across the street was the house of a Mr. John Hase who sold out to the late Mr. A. Hansen, who built the present home there and lived there until his death. He and Andrew Melby operated the Momence Tannery for many years. The present house or rather the north part of the present house on block south used to be the home of the present Mayor Joseph Malone's parents, who lived there 70 years ago, and has been the home of Joseph and his sister all their lives. Miss Mary and I are about the same age. Miss Mary is a little younger but I am the best looking. Across the street south is the home of the late L.B. Clark and was built by him. Half way down the block used to be the home of the late George Simonds and on the corner was the home of his father, Mr. D. Jessup, a veterinary. The half block south and across the road was my father the late William J. Brown's home. This house and the one across the street east of the Central school owned by William Chatfield and the one that used to stand on the corner east of Mrs. Bertha Durham's residence for several years, had the distinction of belonging to the richest men in town on account of



being the only ones in town that had paint on them. But it takes more than that now to make a rich man, even in Momence. Across the road south on the corner was a white house built by a Mr. Brayton and the father of the late Zeno Brayton and Mrs. Jane Holley; the house now stands next south of the V.T. Brassard home. The house on the southeast corner of the block was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. William Astle and is still owned by the Charles B. Astle estate. The block south used to belong to the late John Kirby, and is still owned by the Kirby family. Mrs. Cleary's home behind this on the southwest corner was her grandfather's house and used to stand across the road. To the south was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Heeter, and is still in the family, being the present home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Shaw. One block north of this and across the street stood the home of the late Peter Brassard and for many years now has been the home of their daughter and husband Mr. and Mrs. Mate hand. In the middle of this one-half block used to stand a log house, the former home of the Brassard family, where part of the family was born and reared. On the corner of the next block was the home of the late Dow Edwards for many years. On the northwest corner of the block north of that was a slab shanty, the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Hase, sold later to the late Mr. and Mrs. Sanstrom, parents of the late Fred and Jay Sanstrom, who built the present home on it where U. Grant Brown lives. Across the street north of this a one story frame building was built for a home for a widow Mrs. McNulty and daughter, Jenny, who lived there a long time, and later sold it to the late Mike O'Donnell, which is still owned by his children. A block farther north used to be the home of the late Jim McMann and is still owned by his widow, Mrs. Harvey Force. Across the street west from this is the nice home of Mr. George Mitchell. On the southeast corner is a nice home built a few years ago by the late Mr. and Mrs. George Searls, where they made their home after returning from the farm, which after their death was sold to the late Guy M. Farr and is still the home of his family. A block south of there on the corner is the home built by Walter A. Brown, where they went to housekeeping when they were first married forty-eight years ago Sept 16, 1886. It was sold later and is now the home of Mrs. Hiram Fouser. A block south of that on the corner was the home of Mr. G. Matt. Next south stands a nice large home built by the late Ezra Richerson and after his death was sold to the late Mr. Axel Wickstrom and was

moved away farther west to make room for the most beautiful and costly home in the city, and after their death it was sold to the sisters of the convent and is still used by them and is called Villa Maria. Across the road south of this used to be a slab shanty for many years the home of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Turrell, which they sold and later was torn down. A block south of this used to stand the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, a tailor, the parents of Mrs. Mary Lisman and Thomas Thompson, both of Momence. It was later sold to the late Oran Scramlin, who built the first commercial ice house in Momence on the Island, and who operated it for many years. South of there in the same block was the home of the late Dr. and Mrs. Clark who owned and published the Momence Reporter many years. On the southwest corner of this block was the home of old Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien, the parents of the late Dan O'Brien and the grandparents of our hero Lieutenant Pat O'Brien, and aviator in the world's war. North of this one block stood the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Sharkey, who passed away only a few years ago, the parents of Mr. Placid Sharkey. Next to this was a small one story house belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Champeang, the former being employed by Mr. S. Wilber. On the corner of the block stands the home that was built by a man named Crosse, the father of the late Mrs. Frank Hupp, and today is the home of Miss Hattie Cox. Next to this north used to stand the home of the late Henry Baldwin who owned and operated the first real jewelry store in the town, later going into the milling business and selling his store to his brother, John Baldwin. On the south side on the corner of the next block north used to be a slab shanty, the home of the late John Boet. They had a daughter, Kate, and a son, Mike, also a younger son. Mike became a policeman in New York sometime after leaving Momence. A block farther north on the corner stands the home of the late Fitzgerald family: father, mother, three sons and three daughters, all of whom have passed in except one daughter living in Chicago. The home across the street on the southeast corner of the block was built by Mr. Clark Owell who used to run a wagon-making and blacksmith shop where Mr. N.P. Jensen's drug store stands. Across the street south where Mr. and Mrs. William Brassard lives used to be the home of the late John Stearman, the grandparents of Mr. Elmer Stearman. On the south side going south to the middle of the next block was a slab shanty many years ago the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Bryant, parents of the late George Bryant, and Mrs. Zeno

Goodell, deceased. On the southeast corner of this block where the convent stands used to stand the nice home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Zeno Goodell, which they sold years ago and built a new home on the same street over in the east part of town, near the river. Across the street south of this used to stand a small unpainted building which for many years was used as a Church by the Catholic people. Later it was improved and painted. Several years later it was torn down and a larger new frame Church built very near the same size and style of the building as the present Episcopal Church, and a few years ago this building was moved farther west and used while they built the present Church. On the southeast corner of this block for many years stood the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Nelse Taylor, who had, in all twenty children, most of them are now deceased. They were the parents of Mr. Alfred Taylor (who has built a new home on the same spot,) Nelse Jr., who was deaf and dumb, and Mrs. Clovis Prairie who resides two blocks south next to the river. Their home stands on nearly the same spot where the B. Spreggs slab shanty stood where he died with small pox, and as soon as his body was taken out for burial, oil was thrown on the house and it and all contents were all burned to the ground. A half block west and across the street north stands a two story house built by a carpenter named Mayer, he and his son, Finas, lived there for several years until the father passed away and later it was sold to the widow of the late Tom Riley; the property now being owned by Napoleon Charboneau. On the northeast corner of the same block used to stand the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Ryan, for many years and early day butcher, having ran a meat market near the north end of the north bridge next to J.B. Wickers store. Later on this home was sold and made the home of Dan O'Brien, now deceased. Across the street east on the northeast corner of the block was built the early home of the late Michael Henry, one of these early day slab shanties which were very much the style in early Momence, but was replaced later by the present one on the same place and owned by Mrs. Med Gelino of St. Anne. Mr. and Mrs. Henry were the parents of the late John Henry and Mrs. Margaret Sweet and Mrs. Kate Ceelen of Momence. Two blocks north of there on the same corner of that block stands the house that was the home of the late Martin and Bridget Hughes, who came to Momence about eighty years ago. Across the road north of that was the home of a widow and two sons and

daughter named Griffin, who made their home here for many years, since all have died and the place became the home of the late Isaac Rich, a retired farmer, the father of Mrs. C.B. Astle, Mrs. Mose Searls and Mark Rich, all of Momence, also two other sisters. Two blocks north on the corner used to be the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Frank Snow. The next one south where Miss Jane Thompson used to live was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin, parents of Mr. Charles C. Baldwin. On the southwest corner of the next block stands the large two story home of the late Mr. and Mrs. H. Whitmore. It is now the home of their daughter and husband, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Sweet. Across the street west of this stands a very old house, one of the first built in Momence, the old home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stearman, deceased many years now. It was later owned and occupied by the late Al Storrs and family. South of this two blocks stands the home of the late John Agen. Going one block west and starting at the river on the west side of the street stands what use to be eighty years ago the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Governor Marcy, who had two sons, Frank and Charles; they were stone masons and plasters; also two daughters, Nellie and Jennie; all have passed on years ago. Two blocks north on the east side of the street on the corner used to stand the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Murry and son, Charles. Mr. Murry, I believe was a brother of Mrs. Mike Henry, deceased. The family moved to Baltimore, MD., years ago and the building was torn down. On the northwest corner of the block north stands the old home of the late Arthur Rollins. The house used to stand where the home of the late Mr. Dunton lived and part of it was built in the early time, and was one of the first three that had paint on it. Across the street and one block north on the corner stands the home of Mrs. Frank Turrell; the west part of this house used to be the home of her father, the late George Jones, and stands on the spot where a three room slab shanty used to stand. One half a block farther north stands a large two story white house that was occupied by the late E. Richardson and was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Prather, who moved there and made their home. A block north and across the street east on the corner stands a large white house that used to be the residence of the late Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gray. The front story and a half was built for a home by the late John Chipman, parents of the late Millard Chipman and Henry Chipman, and is the present home of one of Mr. Gray's daughters, Mrs. A.J. Kyle.

In writing this history of Momence it has been my aim only to speak of people and things that the greater majority of the residents of Momence today know nothing about, and I did not wish to leave any one out. I am sorry I did not think of it sooner so I could have given it a little more time and study, but no doubt most of you will tire out before you get this all read and digested.

I must say something about the south side, formerly called Parish town, but much younger than the north side of the river. The farm that Charles Wiltse sold two or three years ago and later laid out as a sub-division of Momence, used to be the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Lowe, and the red brick house on it was built long before I can remember. After the passing of Mr. and Mrs. Lowe it was purchased by the late Charles Wiltse Sr., and later became the property of his son. The place where Charles, Jr. lives used to be his parents' home and they lived there in another house before I can remember. Mr. Wiltse was one of our best farmers. The next house west of Mr. Wiltse's where Mr. Mark Eyler lives used to be the home of the late Sidney Vail, one of the old-timers, and he lived about the longest of any of the boys, 98 years, I believe. The east part of this house is the oldest in town; I think it used to stand up the river somewhere near Neil Metcalf's home. I believe it was the first school house and Miss Loraine Lynds was the first school teacher. Later, or maybe about the same time it was used as the first post office. I believe there is a history of this either in the history of Kankakee County printed about 54 years ago or in one that was written about 40 years ago. The next home west of this for many years was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Orson Beebe; he was a justice of the peace. This home is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Jones, and the next place west of that was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Newel Beebe, parents of the late Professor Ross A. Beebe. One Sunday as Mr. and Mrs. Newel Beebe were on their way home from Church at about noon time and as they were crossing the south river bridge and the ice in the river was breaking up and moving down stream, all at once it took the whole bridge, a wooden one, off its piers downstream with Mr. and Mrs. Beebe on it, down the river about as far or a little beyond Olsen property before they could get to shore. Mr. Beebe was always bald headed after that, (in fact no one in Momence ever knew him to be otherwise.) When Momence first had a telephone not many years after it first

came out a certain Canadian Frenchman living in the northwest part of town was much interested in it, such a wonderful thing, and one day was telling some friends about it, "Why, boys, that is the greatest invention that was ever produced why you can't steal a horse any more for if you do they will phone all over the country and catch you."

Well, the people of Momence will have to take off their hats to Mr. W.W. Parish, Sr., and Mrs. Josephine Graham as the two oldest people in Momence of the later stock of the early settlers. There are a few others left, namely Mate Hand, Charles Styles, Ed Chatfield, Net Osby, Charles Wiltse, Mose Searls, Mark Rich, Walter A. Brown, of Fair Oaks, Cal; U. Grant Brown, Dave Styles and George Hurley of Salt Lake City, Utah; James Atherton of Oakland, Cal; Mrs. Elizabeth Cleary, Mrs. Flora Kirby, Mrs. Margaret Sweet, L.C. Looker of Kankakee; William and Mary Sweeney, John Hughes of Budlee; Mr. C.D. Brown of Boswell, Ind; Dr. Green of Portland, Ore; also D.C. Riker of Spokane, Washington.

Many changes have taken place in Momence even in my short life and I expect to live to see and hear some more. Many of us are like "the old gray mare." But we are not older than we think we are. I am still growing but am not a very good harvest hand any more only at the dinner table with the thrashers, and if what I have written about dear old Momence has interested any of the present Momencites I am glad and satisfied for trying to do my part and sincerely hope Momence will have the greatest homecoming and gathering of her people that has ever been held in her history, especially on September 16<sup>th</sup>, when I first came to Momence with old Mr. Stork and wishing you all a most glorious and happy time I am still one of you and always will be in my mind, and I regret I am not able to be with you personally on this occasion.

Walter A. Brown

# Chapter 2

## EARLY HISTORY OF MOMENCE - 1934

By Walter A. Brown

I have decided to write more History of Momence concerning persons and happenings that did not come to my mind while writing before, as I said before, I am very sorry that I did not think of it sooner so I could have given it more time and study.

Up the river where Neil Metcalf resides, and on the same spot where his house stands, used to be the home of the old Mr. and Mrs. Van Kirk, the parents of the late William and Enos Van Kirk, and the first wife of the late Silas Metcalf. They were among the earliest settlers in these parts and made that their home until they died, and then the home fell to the first Mrs. Metcalf and they lived there until she passed away. Later on Mr. Metcalf married again and continued his home there, he and a young son. A few years later the boy was drowned while playing in a boat not far from the house. Some years later the house caught fire, burning to the ground, but was later replaced by the present one and that was where Mr. Metcalf spent the remaining days of his life. I can remember when I was a boy 6 or 7 years of age going with my father one Sunday afternoon up to see Mr. Van Kirk, as father and he were warm friends, it was a long walk for me then and I got pretty tired by the time we arrived there, and before we got back home I was so tired I could hardly make the riffle. I can remember of many times asking father how many more house we would have to pass before arriving home.

Another old-timer, William Allgood, and English gardener, came here about 65 years ago and lived in a small house just south of the Methodist church where the present home of Mrs. Emma Hayden stands. The first year or two he raised flower seeds (for a Mr. Augustus Ellis, who for several years grew and put up flower seeds for the market); he later on purchased a piece of land on the south side near the stone quarry, later selling same and buying another piece of land from Charles Wiltse, Sr., across the river south of Neil Metcalf's residence, and there

built a home and resided here until he and his wife passed away several years ago. Mr. Allgood was quite a hunter and trapper, and in his younger days, before coming to Momence, used to be a chum of the great pioneer Kit Carson. Mr. and Mrs. Allgood had three sons, William, Frank and Charles, all residing in Chicago Heights.

Mate Hand's folks when they first came to Momence used to live in a house located in the same block where the Episcopal rectory now stands, but later built a home on the northwest corner of the next block west. The next house south of theirs was owned by a man named Ephriam Sines and he had one son, Wilber, about my age; but the Sines family moved away many years ago. About this time, or in 1867, the Episcopal Church was organized, a one-half block was donated by the late James Mix of Kankakee, where the present Chipman home stands, most of the money was subscribed to erect a \$5,000 Church of Gothic architecture of stone with tall spire and abutment walls; a greater part of the stone and sand was already on the ground; and the corner stone was laid with the impressive services by Bishop Whitehouse of Chicago. Two nights later the corner stone and masonry was all torn up, the copper box containing the papers was taken, and this upset the whole affair for years until the building of the present Church of the Good Shepherd on Locust Street. I don't think I ever saw so many people dressed in white as there was on that beautiful May Day in 1870 at the laying of the corner stone for the present Church; all business houses were closed and everyone seemed to take a part in it. The same corner stone of the above mentioned church was again laid at the northeast corner of the present structure.

On the southwest corner of the block where Mate Hand's folks built their home, now Maple Street, was erected the present white house by Mr. Jerry Mogg and he and the late J.M. Webster opened a coal and lumber yard just west of the C&EI depot, several years later selling out. I think to Marick and Eagle, who opened the yard that is now known as the B.L. Tabler & Son coal and lumber yard. Mr. Mogg moved to Chicago and went into the coal business, making a fortune. Mr. Webster later opened a grocery and queens ware store on the corner just north of the Central House Hotel, where A&P store building now stands. He and his wife



have both been dead for several years. Mrs. Bertha Durham of this city is a niece of theirs.

About 1875, late in the fall, Mr. Thomas Sweeney had a thrilling experience while husking corn in a field not far north of the road that crosses the C&EI railroad tracks in the northeast part of town. Just about dark Mr. Sweeney was horribly frightened while turning his team and wagon at the end of a corn row when he noticed a newly made grave with a body buried while the feet and legs were sticking out of the ground, and it is not necessary to say that he did not husk any more corn that day as it was about dark; but he hastened home and then to town to spread the alarm; well the next morning about 8 o'clock or later we boys took the opportunity to go with the crowd and several wagon loads accompanied William Chatfield, the justice, with a law book under his arm, and by the way, Mr. Sweeney suggested taking something along in a bottle "as it smelt dreadful." Well there was several hundred gathered at the scene and one of our doctors that happened to be in the crowd examined the blood on the corn stalks round about, and declared that it was human blood, and up until this time the grave had not been touched, and Ralph Day, everybody's friend found part of a chicken and feathers partly covered with dirt, and he immediately "smelt a mouse," going up to the "grave" and taking hold of the legs pulled them out of the loose dirt, and what a hollering took place. Two long round sticks had been used, a pair of overalls had been stuffed with hay, a pair of shoes was nailed onto the ends of the sticks and stuck thru the legs of the overalls, and the body part of the dummy was buried in the ground. Well the laugh was on us all, and what would we have done only for Mr. Sweeney's bottle on that frosty morning?

About this time the first elevator was built a block north of the C&EI depot by Messrs. Charles and George Blakesley, they also built fine new homes. George built the house where the late Philander Hoag resided and Charles the home of the late Mrs. Mary Hall. Several years later they sold out and later the elevator was owned by Emory Worcester and J.L. Clark who operated same until it burned down. Later Sam Roush erected the present elevator on the same spot.

Shortly after the C&E railroad was built a man named Whitehead came here and built the home next north of the Deerson home, and started a dray business, using a two wheeled wagon of rude construction pulled by a large fine horse he called "Charlie." After several years had passed he gave up the draying and sold his home to the late J.D. LaPlante, and old-time "village" blacksmith.

Mr. James Mix, of Kankakee, who at one time fell heir to the greater part of the land originally platted for Momence, built a large four-room ice house on the island, right on the spot where the boys used to play ball, just west of the tracks, and then ran a shed for ice on three sides of this. This gave him immense storage and he used to ship many carloads of ice during the year, giving employment to many men and boys during the winter when the ice was taken from the river and stored in the big ice house. Some years later the Eugene Ice Company erected a large three-room ice house where the electric light plant now stands on the east side, and gave lots of employment for Momence people. These two houses both burned down and another company called the Lake Ice Company built a five or six room ice house near the brick yard and this was destroyed by fire also after it had been operated several years.

About 1882 or 1883 a small brick yard or clay pit was opened up the river and was found to make a very fine color red brick which was later purchased by Judge Joel Tiffany, and conducted for a number of years by a man and his three sons named Alsop. They built kilns and made fine pressed and ornamental brick, but this proved to be very expensive to produce. Later the management was assumed by a man named Plant, who conducted the business for several years, when it was decided that they would make enameled brick and they got Mr. Isaac Hardy Sr., from England and three sons, James, Ernest and Ralph, who understood making enameled brick, and they have been making enameled brick for about forty years. The late L.J. Tiffany took charge of the business following the death of his father. The Tiffany Enameled Brick company has given steady employment most of the time to quite a number of men.

Colonel Wooster was one of the first photographers in this section and I think the building used by him still stands on the old Wooster farm, now owned by

Wennerholm brothers, southwest of town. Mr. and Mrs. Wooster were one of the early families to settle here, and they had two sons, Charles and Emery, both carpenters and musicians, and one daughter, the late Mrs. J.L. Clark. There is not one left to bear the name Wooster.

The late Jacob Ruger, who built the house located on the lot now occupied by Harry Hall's building on the corner just south of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Mose Searls started the first harness shop in this part of the country. He used to have his shop over on River Street, a block south of this home for many years, later building one of the brick buildings, second east of the Cromwell market, and here carried on his business until his death.

During his time he had several harness shops open in opposition to him, but he out-winded them all, and his was the first and the last in Momence.

The Fourth of July celebration in 1880 was no doubt the largest affair ever held in Momence up to the present time, the parade was immense and the "Rag Muffins" was a sight. Momence had her own band of about twenty pieces or more and had a fine band wagon drawn by four horses. A fine arch across the main street next to the river, two banners, a wonderful display of several hundred dollars' worth of fireworks. It was the first time that the Island had ever been prepared for a celebration and it was covered with people from all over the country. The Vice President of the United States spoke on the Island and in the evening he gave his noted lecture in the old Worcester and Lane hall, seats selling for \$1.00 each. On the north bank of the Island about half way between the bridge and the Stunk home was where the fireworks was fired off and with plenty of water in the river at that time the effect was grand as the reflection in the water when the rockets were fired made it look like they were shooting both ways on the north side of the river. A number of us younger folks were on the top of the old stone store where we got the full benefit of the river reflection. After the lecture in the evening there was a dance in the hall which lasted until the "wee" hours of the morning.

Momence in her day has had four river boats, three that ran by steam and one that ran by sail and polling. The first was built by my father, and named after my

mother, the "Lucy Brown." It was about 30 feet long and 8 or 10 feet wide, had a small cabin in one end and was used principally for carrying freight from Momence to Kankakee, mostly grain from Momence and at certain points between the two places along the river they used sails when they could and poled it at other times and sometimes both. This was way back in 1854 or 1855. One presidential campaign year they took the boat out of the river and mounted it on wagons. I think trimmed it with red, white and blue crepe paper, seated it and took it to Kankakee loaded with women dressed in white to a political rally. It had a flag and pole in the center of the boat and it was said caused much attention as the ship of state entered the county seat. Number two, a steam boat the "Morning Star" a stern wheeler never was ran to speak of below the dams as the water was too shallow the greater part of the year. It had a large flat boat or two that they used in towing up and down the river, often hauling stone and lumber up to Indiana after the C&EI railroad was built and during the summer months they used to take the different Sunday school classes up the river in the big flat boats for their picnic often going to the Garden of Eden, Yellow Banks or Olds Landing. These boat rides were considered a great treat by both young and old alike. Captain Sink ran the boat and he was a jolly fellow and made sport for many. Everybody like Capt. Sink as he was just such a man as Capt. Jinks of the horse merinks that fed his horse on corn and beans.

The third steamer was built by the Eugene Ice Co. to use for cutting the grass and moss loose in the river so that it would float down the river out of the mill pond so they could have clean clear ice to fill their ice houses in the winter. Number four was built by several Momence men to use in hunting and fishing trips up the river. It was a stern wheeler. It had been under construction for some time and people had heard more or less about a pleasure boat being built and one day as Mr. Levi Haslett, one of the interested parties that was building it, was on his way to work he was asked what was the name of the new board and he answered "damn if I know," and from the answer the boat always went by that name. It was a very neat and cozy craft and was run and enjoyed for a number of years, but even that has been out of existence now for many years, in fact ever since the

time the dams were taken out and damn if I know there ever will be another steam boat on the Kankakee River! It is doubtful.

Walter A. Brown

# Chapter 3

## EARLY HISTORY OF MOMENCE – 1934

By Walter Brown

This is a partial list of some of the old time farmers in Ganeer Township; will try and send a list of those in Momence next week. I am sending a list of those I personally knew many years ago and their families not many left now, even many members of their families have passed on, some moved away, and the balance is not many.

Commencing at the C.M. & St. Paul railroad going up on Dixie Highway and working north and west (I may not get some of these farms located exactly right, but you will find most of them very close to where I am placing them.) I will guarantee that none of them have got away very far. The so-called Mix farm, this is now occupied by Mark Nichols, has been operated by many renters besides being run for some time by the owner James Mix, of Kankakee. He built the large barn and was in the thoroughbred Durham cattle business he sold it to Adison Baker and he handled and fed considerable stock until he retired from farming and sold out to Mr. Nichols and Kirby.

Across the road north and west lies the beautiful well- kept farm of the late Robert Gibson. The man that owned his farm when I can first remember was named Swihart, and he had one son named Charles. The next man after him and before Mr. Gibson was Beebe, if I am not mistaken an eastern man.

The next farm north of this years ago belonged to the late George Rice. He sold it to Edward Chipman, who at his death willed it to his nephew who bears the name of his uncle Edward, and who built the present fine home and resided here ever since.

The one next north of this was owned for many years by a Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Sawtell; they ever had any children. They were faithful and devout members of the Methodist Church. After their death Hiram Richardson, who was one of the

heirs, bought out the interests of the others, and owned it for a number of years. I think Charles Hack bought it after Mr. Richardson's death, but only kept it for a short time, selling it to a Mr. Ponton, who I think still owns it. Mr. Sawtell used to have one of the best apple orchards in the country, having had one very strange apple the meat inside of which was half white and half pink.

Going west on the south side of the road we come to a farm that was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Briggs; they had three children, two daughters, Alice and Emma, and a son, Charles, if I am not mistaken. Mrs. Briggs, I think was a sister of the late Mrs. Ruger. After Mr. Briggs' death they sold out to a Mr. Sid Hill, a brother-in-law of the late Mrs. George Rice and Edward Jessup. Several years later Mr. Hill passed away and later they sold it to Mr. Rufus Chamberlain.

The land west of this was owned by the late F.X. Longpre, mostly pasture land. Across the road north and running west is a large farm, 220 acres, I think that was originally owned by a man named Tompkins, the grandfather of the late Mrs. D.E. Styles. Mr. Tompkins sold this farm many years ago to the late Anthony Styles, who made his home there for several years, then moved to Centralia and went into the hardware business, later selling out and coming back to the farm, and there they made their home until they both passed away. What a wonderful world this would be if all the people were as good as Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Styles; they raised a family of nine children, all of them have passed on except Charles of Momence and David of Salt Lake City, Utah, and a foster sister in Los Angeles.

Coming east now on the north side of the road next to the Styles farm is one that used to be owned a long time ago by a man named William Smith; I think they had a son, Gustin, and a daughter, Abby, and also a younger child. I think they lived there up to about forty-nine years ago and sold out to Mr. George Boudreau, who sold this farm about two or three years ago. Then coming east to the corner and going north we come to the Wagner farm that was the home of the parents of the late Mrs. Walter Chipman and Mrs. Hiram Hoag and Albert Wagner; this property, after their death, became the property of the late Hiram Hoag. Placid Sharkey rented it and made his home there for many years. At the death of Mr.

Hoag the farm went to Mrs. S. W. Calkins, who sold it about two years ago to George Sharkey, a son of Placid Sharkey.

North of this farm is the home farm of the late Mr. and Mrs. Edward Chipman, they having built a fine large home there a number of years ago and moved there from the old Chipman farm, across the road east, and lived there until they retired from active service, purchasing the beautiful Burchard home in Momence, where they spent the remaining days of their lives.

Going west from there we come to the old Austin Canavan place, for many years the property of the late Mr. and Mrs. Austin Canavan, later sold to William Gotsick, and later still to Mr. Bydalek. I believe the family still lives there. Next west is the old place of the late Mr. and Mrs. Levi Haslett; they had two daughters, Mary, now Mrs. John Brady, and Alice, also one son, William, who has lived on the farm ever since he was married.

Next west is a large farm, I don't know who owned it before the late Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Wickstrom bought it and built a fine house and outbuildings; they were the first people to have a deer park and a bunch of deer which they still retained for several years after they retired and moved into their beautiful home in Momence, where they lived the balance of their lives. Across the road north was the home of the late Henry Haslett, brother of the late Levi Haslett; they had two daughters, Alice, who married a Mr. Fletcher Buntain, brother of the late Thomas Buntain, and Nettie, who married a Mr. John Faucher; one son, Eaton, who married a lady from the south and later went to California; all have passed on. The Haslett farm was sold to the late Jeff O'Brien and was farmed by him several years until his health failed him and he sold it to the late Frank Snow, the latter residing there until he retired and moved to Momence. A son did live there the last I knew.

Next east of this was the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Snow, father of Mr. Frank Snow; they had three daughters, Levica, Olive and Cary, two sons, Willie, who died when about eighteen years old, and the late Frank Snow. The old home, I think still belongs to the Snow family. Going east and then north we come to what used to be the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Sam Beebe, now owned by Charles Hack. Next north is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Bradley. I don't know who



owned it before they did, but I think Mr. Beebe did. Next north comes a farm that I think Mr. Hiram Hoag did own, but sold it to Mr. Arthur Fish; I don't know who the owner is now. Next west, I believe, was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fish, parents of the late Arthur Fish. West of this is the old home place of the late Jerome Clapsaddle, now owned by their son, L.J. Clapsaddle of Grant Park.

Next west was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sergeant, parents of the late George Sergeant, (an inventor, I understand, of the present shoe used on the corn planter) that is still in use and has never been improved. After Mr. Sergeant's death his son George, the oldest of the three boys, stayed and run the farm and cared for his mother, who lived many years after her husband's death. They had one daughter, the late Mrs. Robert Gibson. The old home farm is still owned by the third generation, Mr. Bert Sergeant, and one sister, Mrs. Mable Jackson of Manteno, a brother passed away several years ago.

I am nearly to my limit in this direction, but I think farther west on the north side of the road is the home of the late Damer Dennis, who spent his entire life on this place. The farm is well improved and Mr. Dennis was one of the best farmers in this part of the country. Mr. and Mrs. Dennis raised a family of five children. Mr. Dennis had one brother, Steve, who owned and published the Momence Reporter for some time, but he has been dead a number of years now.

I think the next farm west of the Sergeant place is what used to be the Squire Little homestead; they had two daughters and two sons, Charles and Frank; one lives on the old home place and Frank has passed away. He married a Miss Ida Smitherman, who also passed on about a year ago. Going west from the little farm for some distance we come to what used to be the home of the late Milton Butts and I believe the original old home building is still standing rather the worse for its age. They had three daughters, the older married Mr. Thomas Gibson, and Cora, the youngest, married Mr. Wash Watson and lives in Kansas, and one lived the life of a maid after the death of Mr. and Mrs. Butts, who were very early settlers. Mr. and Mrs. Gibson bought out the other heirs and owned the whole of the large old home farm. Mr. and Mrs. Gibson have passed on and they had two or three sons and the home property is still in the family or was the last I knew. I

witnessed the raising of the large barn Mr. Butts built a few years before he died, it was one of the largest in the country, and there were many spectators on the scene. The late C.B. Astle and I went to the raising with the late W.P. Watson.

South and east of this comes the old Lane farm, owned by the parents of the late Dr. and William Lane and Mrs. Henry Hicks, all deceased. South of this comes the old John Hanna farm. When he sold his farm some forty years ago for \$10,100.00 for 160 acres it was considered a wonderful sale, a lady named Erickson, I believe, bought it, and it is now owned by her grandson, Carroll Goodell, who lives in Mississippi. South of this comes the B.Y. Reins farm; they were early comers and had two daughters, Emma, who married a man named Rowell, and Ellen, who married the late H.M. Keyser, two sons, Henry, who married a Miss Lamporte, and Gus, are all descendants. The farm was sold after Mr. and Mrs. Reins passed on to the late Damer Dennis, and is still owned by the Dennis family. Across the road east is the old home of the parents of the late John, Silas, Forman, Herman and Oran Scramlin, and the late Mrs. John Hanna; later it became the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Forman Scramlin, and now belongs to their daughter, Mrs. Lura Sanstrom of Mence. Across the road west is the farm home of the late Charles P. Hamlin, now deceased. They had a son, Jay, who married Miss Alice Rice, daughter of the late George Rice, and he passed away several years ago. They had one daughter who married a man named Parker, both have passed on. The farm was later sold to the late M.D. Wells of Chicago, and became the home of the late George Searls and parents until they retired and came to Momence. Across the road east and on the north side of the road is the home of the parents of the late William, George, Pete, Joe, Lina, Emma and Alice Nichols, all have passed on except Mrs. Emma Prather and Mrs. Alice Lively. The old home became the home of Joe and at his death was given to his nephew, Bert, a son of "Pete" Nichols. East of this comes the farm owned for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Dave Osby, later sold to the late W.G. Nichols, which was improved and made an ideal farm. Later the late Jimmy Wheeler farm was bought and added to the Nichols farm after the death of the late William G. Nichols the farms went to his son, Fred and since has gone out of the family, his younger son, Richard, having received other property.

Next east is a farm that used to belong to a farmer named Jessup for many years. After the parents passed away it was sold and later became the property of the late J.J. Kirby. Going west on the south side of this road we come to the farm once owned by the late James Perry, 320 acres, occupied as a renter for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Washburn, who raised two daughters, one marrying a man named Frank Creamer, and the other Arthur Nagle. Several years ago Mr. Washburn decided to retire from the farm and came to Momence, buying the Stephens property on the south side. They have both passed to their reward for a noble life of hard work and honesty. Since the farm has been divided, the south 160 acres of which was sold to the late Thomas O'Connell, who done much improving on it and later sold it. I don't remember who bought the north 160 acres.

Next west of this farm comes the nice home of C.B. Craft, formerly owned by a man named Parker, years ago, but has now been Mr. Craft's home close on to fifty years or more. (Note: I was very sorry to hear of Mr. Craft's death, which occurred early this week.) Mr. and Mrs. Craft had one daughter who married Mr. Phillip Markee, and they have made their home ever since their marriage with Mr. Craft, who was a widower. Across the road north is a farm owned by the late Elbridge Wickes that came to him from his parents who owned it for years before their death; it still belongs to Mr. Wickes family. Next west of that is the old home in very good repair of the late Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Anderson, one of the earliest settlers (they used to say Mr. Anderson was scotch, anyway they were mighty fine people) you would have to get up pretty early in the morning to get ahead of Mrs. Anderson. They had a son, John, who went away years ago, also one daughter who married Mr. Jerome Hayhurst, and they still retain the old Anderson homestead and still have a few of the old gent's bees yet. Mr. Anderson once gave me a stand of bees and I have nearly always had a few bees ever since, I now have four swarms-they mix well with hot biscuits, ha-ha.

North and west of here I will have to leave out; I know many families in that section but cannot plainly locate them. There are the Browleys, most of them gone, and the old stock of Blanchards, mighty fine old Canadian-French people. I have sold them hundreds of dollars' worth of goods years ago. And there is the Stebens, Surprenants, DeLauriers, Pontos and Bouchards. There is a farm lying

west or northwest of the Anderson farm some distance that used to be owned by Mr. and Mrs. France Fowler, who had a son and a daughter, but they sold out and went west many years ago.

Now coming south we arrive at the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. J. Lake, who came here from the east; they had three daughters, Katie, who married the late William Storrs, and Mary, who married a Mr. Grosbek and Flora, who married William Clark, only son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Bela Clark. (the three daughters and husbands all deceased) and four sons, Charles, who married Miss Frankie Ruger, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. J. Ruger; Henry, who married a Miss Allie Kelsey; Jerome, who married Miss Mary Dixon, and Dick, who married a Miss Hayhurst; the sons settled in different places and the parents sold the farm and retired to a well-earned rest, buying a home in Momence, later selling it and going to Iowa. One of the Ponto boys bought the farm and I believe it is still owned by a member of that family. Across the road west from the Lake farm is District No 45 school house, called the Lake school, and the home of Mr. Ivan Bergeren. This land was formerly a part of the late George Hoag farm, who had three sons, Ethan, Edward and Archie; Ethan married and moved to Michigan, Ed married a Miss Mary Stabler and later moved to the state of Washington, and Archie married a Miss Gertrude Storrs and went into the grain business at Exline. Emma married a man named Hoag and went to Michigan to live and Miss Hattie is still Miss Hattie, making her home with the youngest daughter, Carrie, who married Charles Styles, and lives a retired life in Momence. The farm was sold later and Mr. and Mrs. Hoag moved to Momence.

West of the Hoag farm comes the farm and first home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Michael Moran, parents of the late James Moran, and was later bought by its present owner, Mr. J.G. Bouchard, a good substantial farmer, having raised a family of ten children. Mr. Bouchard was clerk of the school district for many years while I was treasurer for twenty-four years of Ganeer Township and Momence union district. Mr. Bouchard's reports were always in on time and always correct, the best of all seven districts reporting to me. Across the road south of Mr. Bouchard's farm is the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Storrs, very early settlers; they had two sons, William, who married Miss Katie

Lake, both deceased, and Albert, who married Miss Mary Garret, daughter of the late Capt. Garret, both have passed away, and two daughters, Miss Hattie, who was a teacher for many years, the writer used to go to school with her, she lived and died a Miss, and there was another daughter who married and went west. After Mr. Storrs' family all grew up and left home they sold the farm and purchased a residence in Momence, where they spent the balance of their lives in rest and comfort. Mr. Storrs was a man without an enemy in the world.

Next east of this was a farm owned by the late L.B. Clark, and is part of the estate of his daughter the late Mrs. Carrie Paradis. Next east was the home of the late Isaac Rich, who sold to Mr. Clark when he retired and came to town to live. Next east and on the corner is a large farm of about 480 acres that was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Capt. Wheeler Richards. They never had a family (and at one time when I was a small boy came to my parents and wanted to adopt me as their child, although my parents had six children, they could not see where they had any to spare, but it was very kind and thoughtful of Mr. and Mrs. Richards. Mr. Richards got kicked by a horse and was killed. She operated the farm for a while and later rented it for many years to the late Alfred Styles. Mrs. Richards came to Momence and lived a number of years, finally moving to Los Angeles, where she spent the remainder of her life. She was a great lover of flowers and beauty and during the festivities of the Momence Hay Palace she as one of the judges pronounced the window and external decorations of the John Ransom store on the corner (now Hack's corner) to be the best. The east window represented the inside of an old time barn and granary, and the arch over the entrance of the store was most keeping. Since Mrs. Richard's death the property has been sold, mostly all to the High family, and the remainder divided among her relatives. Across the road east on the corner is the farm of Mrs. Willard Smith and was originally a part of the Eldridge farm, and next east of that is a part of the old Woods farm now owned by Joe Novak. Mr. and Mrs. Woods lived in the house farthest east, near the creek, they had two children, a son, Albert, and a daughter who married a man named Moe, both deceased now. Then passing the next farm, already described, comes the old Brayton farm owned many years ago by the

parents of the late Zeno Brayton, for many years run by the late Silas and Ed Metcalf, deceased, and now owned by the V.T. Brassard estate.

Next east is the farm of the late B.F. Gray, now the property of Mr. and Mrs. Kallender. South of this is the small farm years ago owned by the late Jim Perry, who built the present home there, and late Mr. and Mrs. Knighthart, and is now the home of their daughter, Mrs. Frank Meinzer. West of this is where many years ago the late Deacon Storrs used to live. He was the step-father of the late Jasper Conant, who with his mother and sister, made their home there many years, later selling to Damey Templeton and later to Mr. Lundstrom. H.N. Hungerford owns it now. Next west used to be owned by Phillip Worcester. He died there, I believe, and later the place was owned by George Hoag and later still by M.F. Chipman. Next west used to belong to a Mr. Porter, who died there, later on was sold to Mr. Miner. The place west of this used to be owned by Worcester and was operated by him and his brother-in-law, the late Mr. Harry Ballard. Sometime after Mr. Ballard's death was sold to a Mr. Lankow, but the south part of which and Island now belongs to Atty. V. A. Parish. When a boy I was very familiar with the place, often visiting at the Ballard home as their elder son Wally and I were life time friends. I remember once coming home on the stage run by J.B. Wickes that carried the mail to and from Kankakee. I was a little chap and Mr. Ballard hailed the stage and put me on the front seat; it was pretty crispy weather and the driver wrapped me up with a buffalo robe and took good care of me, I will never forget it. When I got home I thought I had done something big. I certainly spent many happy hours at the Ballard's house down on old Tower Creek. How well I remember the old orchard, not a tree left there now, the fine sheep, the poultry and the pea fowls, the walnuts, hickory nuts and hazel nuts, the mandrakes, the big thorn apples and the wild grapes, wild gooseberry bushes, the mushrooms, the large bee tree in the grove that contained a wash tub full of honey.

Next west on the north road comes the old Cox farm that has been owned and occupied most of the time by some of the family for eighty years or more. There were two sons, John and Joseph. John married a Miss Skeels and Joseph married a stranger to me. There were two daughters, one married a man named Robert Goodell and the other, Margaret, never married. The old home is still owned by

the Cox family. Next comes the Smitherman farm owned and operated for years by Mr. and Mrs. Smitherman. They had three daughters, Ida, married Charles Little, both deceased; the other one married the late Pete Nichols; the third daughter passed away years ago. I think the place was bought and added to the Cox farm. Next west comes a large farm, formerly owned by the late Clark Richards, brother of Capt. C. Richards. It originally constituted what is now Mrs. Willard Smith's farm on the north side of the road, and the land lying next to the Cox property, now belonging to the heirs of Mrs. Ike Hobby, and the west part (where Cecil Duguay lives) to Mrs. Florence Van Kirk. Mr. and Mrs. Richards had three sons, Frank, the eldest, and Charles, and another, the youngest died many years ago in an accident. Mr. Richards was instrumental in building the New York Central railroad when it was first started, and he went broke, losing his property, which was too much for him and he took his own life and the property later became that of the late Eldridges, the father and three sons all having passed away.

Next south and east comes the farm home of the late Mr. and Mrs. DuBridge, formerly owned by a man named Allaces, but for the last forty years has belonged to the DuBridges and is still in the DuBridge estate. Next is the house formerly owned by the late Mr. and Mrs. William Perkins, who were among the first settlers here; they had three sons, George, who married a Miss Bunch. But passed on many years ago; Frank married Katty Stabler and they went to Oregon; Aaron also passed on several years ago. Mary, who married a man named Peters, and went to Iowa. I think, and Cornelia, who married William Hill, now lives in Los Angeles. The road north of their place, running east to Momence, used to be called "Perkin's Land, " a dread of the country, and still a part of the best road going to Kankakee. The country in those days had not been drained and this lane seemed to have no bottom; after putting in hundreds of carloads of stone it seemed to sink down and continually called for more. On the corner north of Mr. Perkins' house where you turn south the water stood there more or less the year around, and in the fall I have seen as high as three muskrat houses in them. A few years after this land had been tilled I have seen fine crops of corn and oats grown where the muskrat houses used to stand. Later Mr. and Mrs. Perkins retired from

the farm and bought a home in town. Their son, Frank, ran the farm for a number of years but his father used to make regular daily trips to the farm and did his share just the same as when he lived there. Later they sold the farm to Mr. Frank High, who has resided there ever since and reared a large family all of whom have stayed at home and working together in unity there is strength, and so in this case, for they have prospered and acquired several hundred acres adjoining their farm and now own land enough for all his sons besides building a fine new home and other farm buildings. Next south of the High home is the farm owned many years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Turner. They were hard working and saving people and never had any children, although they did adopt a daughter in later years. They used to have one of the best apple orchards in the country. When I was young and used to help father run the cider mill in the fall I remember Mr. Turner bringing a large load of snow apples and made into cider we put 40 bushels of the apples into the hopper and while putting more apples into the hopper I filled a 47 gallon barrel with cider that ran out of the press before we started using the pressure. The cider was very pleasant to drink although a little thin. Later we put on a load of Talman sweet apples and ever ran out a drop of cider while filling up the hopper but when we put in the pressure it came out nearly as thick and sweet as syrup. We could give a hopper full of apples 80 tone of pressure. After Mr. and Mrs. Turner's death the farm was sold to the late Damer Dennis and now Percy Dennis, a son of Damer Dennis, reside there. Going west and around the corner lies a small farm owned years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Cy Hopper; they had a family of three daughters and four sons; one daughter married Mr. Charles Baldwin of Momence, the second married a man named Schomer, and the youngest one married Mr. Charles Hayden of Momence, and the boys married whoever they pleased and never said a thing to me about it. After Mr. Hopper's death the farm was sold to Mr. Clapsaddle and added to his farm, the next west. Mr. and Mrs. Clapsaddle had two sons, Alfred, who married a Miss Bradley, sister to Leonard Bradley, and then went to Iowa, I believe; he passed on several years ago. Plumer married a Kankakee lady and lives in that city. The parents retired from the farm to Kankakee and both passed away. The old home place is now the property of their son, Plumer. Going west on the south side of the road we come to the home formerly owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Cox



for many years; they had two sons, Fred, who married Miss Emily Melby, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Joe Melby; the other son died several years ago. One daughter married a Mr. George Grant and lives on a farm west of Manteno; and the younger daughter, May, married a Mr. William Lyne. Mr. and Mrs. Cox retired several years ago and came to Momence to live after a well-earned rest and later Mr. Cox passed away. Their son, Fred and wife, live on the farm. Across the road and farther west is the Dennison farm. Next west of that is the old Robert Goodell home. Mr. and Mrs. Goodell were among the first settlers and they had two daughters and a son, George, who married and lived on the old home place and raised a family, retiring several years ago, going to Kankakee to live and was killed in an auto accident a year or so ago. I think son-in-law lives on and runs the farms since Mr. and Mrs. Goodell retired. West of this comes the Exline Church and Woodman hall and the village. Next west coming right up to the village is the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Hunter, who had one son, William. They all retired from the farm several years ago, going to the county seat to live, since father, mother and son have died. Across the road south on the corner is a large farm, for many years owned by the late Mr. and Mrs. Michael Moran of Momence. They had three sons and three daughters, all deceased except the youngest son, who did live in Los Angeles, and the last I remember the farm was owned by a Mr. Patterson.

Coming back to the Clapsaddle farm and going on down the river we come to another early settler and one of the best known and most highly respected families in the county, that of our late Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Farr. They had three daughters, one marrying Mr. Stul Brown and they went west to live; one died and the other married and went to Michigan. There were three sons, William, who married and bought a farm near Beebe town but passed away. Later the second son married and went to Indiana to live where he passed away and Guy, who married and resided on the old home farm for many years, later buying a home in Momence and retired. He also owns a farm in Indiana. He passed away only a few months ago. Following down the river we come to the George Exline home where he and his aged mother lived for years. George lived and died a bachelor. I don't know what disposal was made of the property. Next west of this comes the Asa

Beebe home for many years. They had two daughters, one married Mr. Frank Baldwin and they resided in Kankakee for many years, Mr. Baldwin passing away a few years ago; the second married the late Alfred Styles and she died a number of years ago, and the son Mark, who fell heir to the old home, married Mayme Lewis of Momence, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Vean Lewis. They had one son, and I think, one daughter, and they have been in Kankakee for years. Mr. Beebe died only recently. Coming back to Exline and thence along the "old Kankakee road" to Court street bridge we cross the beautiful Kankakee River the multitude that is with us visiting the homes of these departed settlers are now standing on the banks of the river just at the Avon resort and sad as we all are, we are singing the good old song, "On the banks beyond the river we shall meet no more to sever in the bright forever in the summer glad of song. Chorus; Rocks and storms we will fear no more when on that eternal shore drop the anchor, furl the sail, we are safe within the vale." We will continue our signing at this place for the coming week; anyone wishing to join us may do so by paying a year's subscription to The Progress, in advance, and enjoy the thrill of reading your home paper all paid for.

# Chapter 4

## EARLY HISTORY OF MOMENCE – 1934

By Walter Brown

Here is more history of old farmers and early settlers in Ganeer Township, commencing at the east bank of the Kankakee River at the Court Street or old Exline bridge. The first house on the south side of the bridge is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Langman; this is at the Avon, a summer resort. Mr. Langman is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Langman of near Waldron (now Aroma Park,) and he married Georgia, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Brown of Waldron. They have two daughters one son and have lived here for a number of years. The land across the road north is owned by Johnny Brown, also a son of Mr. and Mrs. George Brown. Farther east some distance is a summer resort "Riverwood," belonging to a group of colored people of Chicago. Next comes what used to be the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Sawyer, who came here many years ago. They had one son and one daughter; both married and moved away a long time ago and the house passed into the hands of a stranger.

The place north of the above used to be the home of Dick Exline and later Lon Exline, and after his death to her two sons, John and Harry, and it is still owned by the Exlines. East of this we strike the Dixie Highway, then comes Mr. and Mrs. Fred Langman's nice farm, left to them by her father, which they have done much permanent improving on. Across the road north is the large farm belonging to Johnny Brown. It was originally the home of his grandparents, later the property of his father, and at this father's death it fell to him. North of this the land originally owned by the parents of Walter and "Ike" Hobbie and at their father's death he left this land and that lying across the road east to his son "Ike" and other property in and near Kankakee to his other son, Water, who after his mother's death, sold and came to California to live. "Ike" also had a residence in Kankakee where he lived and operated the farm near Momence. He married Miss Millie Eldridge; both have passed on, leaving two daughters and three sons.

North of this land stands the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Harry Moe, who took up this land from the government many years ago. The east part of the house was their first home. They had two sons, Riley and Amos; Riley married a Miss Betsy Peters, they had one son, Willie, and one daughter, Laura, both of whom are now residing in the west. They had four daughters, Mary, who married a man named Deshields, and they had four children, Clarinda, who married a Mr. Cord Case, one daughter, Mable, and Christina, who became the wife of Mr. Silas Scramlin. They had one daughter, Theresa, who married Walter A. Brown. The old folks and all of their children have all passed and the old home has passed into the hands of strangers.

Across the road southeast of the Moe Farm was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Silas Scramlin, now the property of Lucy and Oswald Brown. The place south of this used to belong to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hewitt, who lived there for many years, later selling it and moving to Kankakee to live, where the former was elected county treasurer. Across the road is the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Alden Luther, very early settlers here. They lived there until they both came to the end of life's journey. They had one son, Clarence, who never married and died many years ago, also three daughters, Emma, who used to be my school teacher, she married a man named Fisher and went west to live; Laura, never married; Anna married a Mr. Ed Metcalf and they went west, both deceased now. The farm is now owned by the Hertz estate. South of this farm and the Fred Langman place lies a large track of land owned many years by the late Frank and John Law. Most of the property was left to Frank's widow and daughters. East of this stands the old home farm of the late Brock Wiltse who had two sons and three daughters. The parents died years ago and the family all left this locality with the exception of the eldest daughter who married a man named Babin, but they have both passed on. North of the Wiltse farm is the home of the late John Wilson. Next north is the old home of the late Capt. Garrett and wife; after their death it was taken over by their son, James, who married Miss Nettie Jaquish and made their home there. One of the daughters, Irene, who married Arthur Pittman, lives on the old home place. There were two sons in Capt. Garrett's family, William, who

married Miss May Dayton, and a daughter, Elizabeth, who married Mr. William Parish, and Mary, who married the late H.A. Storrs.

Across the road north is located the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Wilson. They have one son and one daughter. The farm was formerly owned by the late Charles Wiltse, Sr. Next to this lies 240 acres of land owned many years ago by the late Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Mogg; Mrs. Mogg was a sister to Mr. William Parish and was my first school teacher in the old "White School House." (now Sherwood bottling plant.) The farm now belongs to U. Grant Brown, who has one son, John, and two daughters, Lyle and Della. John is an airplane pilot, Lyle a mathematics teacher in the M.C.H.C., and Della a bookkeeper in Chicago.

North of the Brown farm in the old Ichabod Stoddard farm. They had two sons, William and George; both married and went west, selling the old home to the late Isaac McCann. After his death it was sold to Archille Beaupre, the present owner. East of this and south of the river is Mrs. William Brassard's farm, and east and a little south of this is the old farm of Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Parish, Sr., among our first settlers, and they lived and reared their family there. They had two daughters, the eldest married Charles Bellinger; Carries, the youngest and Varnum, passed away at the same time with a fever, and W.W. Parish, now president of the Parish Bank & Trust Co., of Momence is the only one left of that family. The old home is still in the Parish family, all members of whom are buried in Mr. Airy Cemetery on the Parish home farm. South of this comes the farm of the late Mr. and Mrs. Metcalf, early settlers, and is still in the family. I think they had three daughters and four sons, Chester and Orris both of Momence; one son and one daughter and the parents departed his life years ago. South of that used to be the home of the Laws and I think it is still owned by the two daughters. South of this is a large farm owned a long time by M.O. Clark, but it sold a few years ago. South of this stood the old Soren Sorensen homestead. Now, commencing at the river again, going south is the home of the late William and Elizabeth Parish, where they spent practically all of the married life. They have on daughter, Marcia, who married a man named Orson Porter, oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Archie Porter, and they went west; they had one son, William W., who now owns and operates the Porter elevator and coal yard on the south side; one daughter, Mrs. Ruth Arntzen. Mr.

and Mrs. Parish and Mr. and Mrs. Porter have all passed. Then comes the home of the late Capt. Bela Clark. They had one son, William who married Flora Lake, both deceased, five daughters, Flora, who married Mr. B.F. Gray, Helen, who married Joseph Tower, and Mary, who married Anson A. Culver, Bertie, who married Alfred Kristoferson, and Lottie, who married a man named Charles Frost, Mabel , who married Haynes Hartlan and lives near Piggott, Ark., and Mildred, who married Karl Kawkami of Washington D.C. Mr. and Mrs. Gray, Mr. and Mrs. Tower, Mr. and Mrs. Culver and Mr. Kristoferson all passed away several years ago. The home was sold to Joseph Clark. Next south is the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Stetson. They had three sons, Emory and Ray, who married and went west, Lewis, who married a Miss Stearman and resided on the old place several years after his parents retired and went to Momence to live, later passing on, he later sold the farm and went to St. Louis, Mo., to live. South and across the road is Mr. and Mrs. Chester Metcalf's home farm where they have lived many years; place was formerly owned by Bish Parish. South of this comes a fine farm home built by the late Mr. and Mrs. Archer Porter, who lived there many years and reared their family; they had three daughters, the eldest married Mr. C.B. Craft, Ella married Mr. Abe Minor, and Carrie married Mr. Bonvalette, and lives near Wichert; the oldest son married Miss Parish, and Charles married Edna Wooster of Momence. South and across the road is the old Jones home, parents of Ezra Jones and Mrs. Diantha Dryer. South of this is the home of Mr. Keeney; but on farther I cannot give the exact locations of homes of good many old-timers, among them are Mr. and Mrs. A. Bras, Mr. and Mrs. C. Tallman, Mr. and Mrs. Picklesma, Mr. and Mrs. Wingerter and family, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Chamberlain, also the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Vail, and of the late Mr. and Mrs. Condon, Mr. and Mrs. Crosby and the home of the Boog family. All these old-timers used to do their trading in Momence.

Commencing again at the Kankakee River going south come the late Col. Lyman Wooster home which had already been described and now belongs to the Wennerholm Bros., who have much improved the already beautiful country home. On the next corner south and across the road is a farm that used to belong to the late B.F. Gray, later to Archer Porter and now to C.B. Craft's daughter, Mrs.

Phillip Markee. Next south for many years was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lamport. They had one daughter, who married William Clapsaddle. They later came to California and have passed on, one son George, who still lives in California, had never married. Later the farm was sold to Charles Porter, now residing in Chicago. The land adjoining the above farm belongs to Holley Kinney. Farther down the road about a mile stands the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Frank Chamberlain. Here they raised their family of three sons and one daughter, Mrs. Chamberlain was one of the best butter makers in the country. I think she was a sister of the late Jerome Vail. Then there is the home of Charles Abbott near there, and then across the road east is the old William Abbott farm. North of that comes the Holley Kinney farm home that used to belong to the late Gus Meinzer. North of this is the old Deacon Lamport home, one of the first built here. They raised a large family. There was John, Henry, Joseph, Edward and four daughters; one married Mr. Abe Beebe; one Andrew Dayton; one a Mr. Richardson, and one Henry Reins; all deceased now. Across the road north of this is part of the Col. Wooster farm, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. William Brassard. To the north of that is the W.W. Parish farm, one of the most fertile and highly cultivated pieces of farmland in the county; it has been in the family years before I can remember. Going to the "Sid" Vail corner and turning south we come to the farm belonging to Ed Chatfield, another up-to-date farm. Next comes the old Richardson farm, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Grant Gordinier. Mrs. Gordinier was formerly a Richardson. South of this and across the road is the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Sam Alexander. They had two daughters, one marrying Gus Meinzer, and the other Ed Lamport, and one son, Scott, who married a Miss Julia Taylor; he and his sisters and parents have all passed away. The home passed into other hands several years ago. East and south of this comes the farm property of the late William Garrett, who married May Dayton, and who spend all their married life on the farm, rearing a family of three boys and one girl; one son passed away several years ago, the youngest son still runs the farm. We skip one farm here, then comes the late "Pete" Nichols ranch or "Big Springs" farm, for many years used mostly for cattle grazing, but since has been drained with tile and dredge ditches so that the greater part of it is now farmed. Across the road north of the Garrett farm we come to the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Abe

Beedle, early arrivals here. They had three daughters, Alma, who passed away several years ago; Mary, who married William Libhart, and Belle, who still carries the Miss. Mr. Beedle for a number of years had one of the finest vineyards in his neighborhood. Then north comes the home of Mr. and Mrs. Merritt Dayton, formerly owned by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. "Anse" Dayton, who was one of our good early farmers and stock men. They raised a family of two daughters, May who married William Garret, and Etta, who married a Mr. Davidson; three sons, William who married and went to New York state and later passed away, Emory, who married Ida Bales, Merritt, who owns the old home. His mother was one of the best butter and cheese makers in the county. North of this is the farm of Mr. Frank Davis, originally owned by Orson Beebe. North of this is the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wiltse Sr., now the property of Charles Jr. Then following east comes the home farm of the late Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Chatfield, who raised two daughters Maud, marrying a Mr. Everhart, and Beulah married Mark Nichols; also four sons, William, who married and went west, raised a family and passed on about a year ago; Ed, who married Miss Hattie Hoag, and George who married Mrs. Kent and went to Minnesota; and Webster, who married and went to Oregon, I think. The old home is still in the family. Going south from Chatfield farm to the corner east we come to the Dillard farm; I have forgotten who used to own it. Further south comes the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Miner, another old-timer; they had three sons and one or two daughters; Abe married Miss Porter and Rube a Miss Schaub. Across the road east is the farm owned by George Lines. I think north of this is the farm formerly owned by the late William Dayton, and still further north is the old Nichols farm. North of this on the corner stands a white school house that used to go by the name of the Miner school.





# Chapter 5

## EARLY HISTORY OF MOMENCE – 1934

By Walter Brown

On the corner, east of the Chatfield farm, is the home of “Benny” Thompson. North of this stands the old home of Dr. David Lynds, one of the early settlers in this vicinity. The Lynds had three daughters, namely, Susan, who married the late Edward S. Cooke; Mary married a Mr. Little and moved to Ohio to live; Eve married the late John Freeman. All have passed this life and the old home has been out of the family many years, and is now owned by a Mr. Peterson. Located a short distance east of this is the Tiffany Enameled Brick plant. To the south of the road, now Highway 114 stands the farm of the late Mr. and Mrs. Sam Shrontz, the former a brother of the late Dr. John Shrontz and Mrs. Julia Campbell, of Momence. It is now owned by their son, Mack Shrontz. Next south is the farm now owned by Mrs. Florence Burt, and south of this is the late Nate Sherwood farm. Still farther south comes Howland Wiltse old home farm. Here they reared their family of two sons, Hartford, who with his parents and one sister has passed on, and Bert, who now lives in Momence with another sister, Mrs. Hattie Monroe.

To the south and west come the farms of the late David Greenawalt, Richard Temple, Eugene Mathers, Mark Eyler and Ward Mills and the old McMann home.

Going back to the river road and east of Mack Shrontz place comes the old Lewis farm. The Lewis' had a son, William, who owned the farm at one time; also a daughter, Jessie, who married and left here years ago. South of this is located the home farm of the late Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lamport. They had several children, Clarence, who is now a retired mail carrier and lives in Momence; Mrs. Thomas Greenawalt; Mahlon of Monon, Ind.; Andrew, of Chicago; Herman, deceased, who went to Michigan to live; Ella, of Niles Center, who married Seth Shepherd and who owns the old home farm, and May, deceased, who married George Wallace. The parents, one son and one daughter have passed on. The late Walter Hess, Jr.,

owned a farm somewhere southwest of this. East and north of the Lewis place was a farm owned for many years by Mr. and Mrs. "Wheel" Dryer, and after his death it was sold. East of that was the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Hess, parents of Rev. George Hess of Charles City, Iowa, Mrs. Lois Tahney of Rosebud, Montana, Mrs. Nina Burton of Momence, and another daughter, Florella Koehler, deceased, lived at Marysville, Tenn., and her family now lives in Florida. Next east of the Lewis farm, on the south side of the road, used to be the old home of the late Walter Hess, Sr., another of the very oldest homes. Mr. Hess married three times and had several children, loving and cherishing them all; I think they have all passed now. Next place east of that used to belong to Cornelius Bradley sixty years ago, later to Caleb Wells and later to Merritt Wells. South of this was located the Mahlon Hess home. South of the Hess farm used to be the home of the late V.T. Brassard, where he lived for several years after his marriage. East of Brassard's place was located the farm of the parents of the late Noel and Mitch Cantway, later belonging to Noel. To the south and east of this and also the Brassard farm, lies what used to be about 2,000 acres of land belonging to Bondurant's, mostly grazing and hay land. Later it became the property of William Comstock and son and they used it mostly for handling broncos brought there from their ranch in Montana. Fred and Lott Ceelen, Fred Sweet and Al Van Ordstrand all used to work out there breaking and handling bronchos. Later it was owned by Ed Tallmadge, who sold the land in small tracts. We can't give any history of the Tallmadges, sorry to say.

North of the Cantway ranch was the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Exor Guertin. They resided there many years and raised one son, Lewis, who married Nettie Knauer, and they resided on North Dixie Highway in Momence; also one daughter who married John Ramsey, moved away, now deceased. North of their home was land owned by some of the Hess', mostly grazing land. Next east comes the old home of the late "Sol" Kendrick. They owned several hundred acres of land, mostly used for pasture and hay raising. Part of the ranch lies in Illinois and part in Indiana and their home stood right on the state line. Quite a distance south and east of this was a Danish settlement, poor but honest and hardworking people, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Martin Madison, Chris Hanson, Fred

Hanson, Mr. and Mrs. Silkabah, typical old country peasantry, it was very hard to understand the old gent's English. He was a very large man. A sad thing happened when he became missing and was never again heard of. The whole country roundabout was searched and a reward offered, but to no avail. These people all came to Momence to trade.

Going some distance east of the Kendrick ranch we come to a good sized log house, the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, who used to own the corner where the Dixon property is years ago and operated one of the town's first saloons there. Farther east we come to the Blair ranch, consisting of several hundred acres. Mr. Blair was a Chicago banker. He went on and much improved this place with a fine house and barn, he also purchased cattle and put them on this ranch, he had a man named J.R. Davis as superintendent for several years and they raised many fine horses, Mr. Blair being a lover of fine horses and was often sending out horses and vehicles from his beautiful home in Chicago. Mr. Davis seldom came to Momence twice with the same horses and carriage. One that he did come in more than any other I think was a high front cater, open brougham, drive 3 horse in tandem; he enjoyed it and we all liked to see him come in this style. Finally he went away to some oil fields in the southwest. His daughter married and his youngest son, an actor, went to Hollywood and joined the movies, receiving a big salary. The last I knew of him (I helped to raise him to a Master Mason.)

Now we come back to the second place east of the Walsh railroad. This used to be the home of Wallace Hess years ago and it was sold about the time he came into Momence to live, I think "Jim" Cromwell bought it, or a part of it. Farther east and beyond the "Cantway Slough," comes the Hess school house, and the small farm farther on used to be called "Old's Landing" later owned by the late John Fedde, but was sold again about the time of his death. East of this comes a large red brick house that used to be the home of a Mr. West, an old bachelor, who passed away years ago and is now occupied by a niece and nephew. I believe east of that and on the north side of the road used to be the home of "Doc" West, but I don't know who owns it at the present time. Now comes the old Thad Mott home, a noted horse trader, he had one daughter, Minnie, who married Horace Marshall

and went to Chicago Heights to live, passing away only a few months ago. Mr. Mott died in that neighborhood about a year ago, he was 95 years old. Farther east, just this side of the state line, stood what used to be the home of old lady Ainsworth. I used to know her well, have sold her lots of goods; the last time I say her was 16 or 18 years ago, but I have heard of her death. She had two sons and a daughter.

Before we go north we will run up into the Beaver Lake country where there is some very poor land that used to be the east shore of the lake years ago before they drained it out with what they used to call the "Big Ditch," a man I know well lives southeast of Momence had a friend come to see him while he lived on my farm down the river. He had not seen the man for several years and had lost all trace of him and of course he was glad to see his old friend and asked him where he lived now. On one of the farms on the east side of the lake, etc. Well, how is the land over there. Well, John, it is awfully poor, in fact so dammed poor that God never goes there and the devil goes but once a year. (Isn't that one way of describing soil fertility?)

Now going north following the state line through some rather poor country we come to Illinois station. Here I am not much acquainted any more. Following along the road going west we come near to the little Yellow Bank or the Garden of Eden, formerly owned by Dan Parmerly, a very good hearted man with some strange ideas. They lived there many years, reared a large family. Mr. Parmerly collected a large number of relics and curiosities and could read whole chapters out of some stones. Both he and his wife died a number of years ago and the land has been drained out with the rest of the surrounding country and his place is now quite a summer resort and golf ground, most of which is owned by Neil Metcalf. North of this is a farm that Oliver King did tenant for a number of years, finally moving south and west to the Bellingers farm, formerly owned by J.B. Wickes of Momence. I once helped the late Joseph Clark survey on his land when Mr. Wickes owned it. It was mostly marsh land then. During July and August Mr. John Looker and I carried chains and waded thru the tubes and water lies in water up to our arm pits for half a mile or more. A few years later, after this land had been ditched and tilled, I saw wonderful crops of corn, small grain growing in this

land which runs west to the Walsh railroad. Going back east on the north side of the road we come to the home farm of the Temple brothers, who have occupied same for many years. East of this on the road that goes north from Edgetown comes the farms of Mr. John Woore, where on the east side of the road, they have lived Fifty years of more, raising their family consisting of three sons, one was killed several years ago; Henry married and came to California to live, Charles lives across the road from his parents; one daughter married Ernest Anstrom and resides a short distance north of her parent's farm. Mr. Woore's mother, who lived with them for a number of years before she passed away, used to come to town with her son and his wife once in a while. She had spent part of her life in Jamaica and was very fond of warm country fruit and she always bought some oranges or bananas when she came to town, and when she did not come in, or was sick, it was a pleasure to remember her with some fruit. She was a very nice old lady to talk to and often spoke of Jamaica and the south, and by the way, you would have to get up before breakfast to beat Mrs. John Woore making butter. I believe if a person could always have as good butter to that as Mrs. Woore used to make, they would live forever. I really think that is the reason why John is sticking around like he is, ha! ha! ain't I right John? We will stay with the Woore's the coming week.

# Chapter 6

## EARLY HISTORY OF MOMENCE – 1934

By Walter Brown

Leaving Mr. John Woore we will just run up the Kankakee marshes near the state line and over into Indiana. Many years ago General George W. Cass, of New York, owned a large tract of land up in this country and in those days there was generally more water than land in sight, much better for hunting and trapping than most anywhere else, but through the advice of W.F. Singleton of Kentucky, he persuaded Mr. Cass to run some large dredge ditches through this and other lands and drained it out. It took several years to do this with two or three dredges at work. At first the idea was ridiculed very much, but later other dredged ditches were made, and today a greater part of the old marshes are drained out and very good crops raised on the most of it. Mr. John Stowell and sons and others were engaged in doing this work which took quite a number of years to complete and sometimes these dredges were run night and day. It kept a man and team busy most of the time hauling supplies to the workmen.

Mr. Singleton brought his family to Momence to live from Kentucky. His wife was a very fine woman, and a perfect lady. A worldly person cut no figure with her; a poor person or a rich one was all the same to her. She was the daughter of Governor MaGoffin of Kentucky, and Momence never saw a more perfect lady in every respect than this one. They had one daughter, Mamie, also three sons, Shelby, who is a lawyer in Chicago, and John and Frank. It kept Mr. Singleton pretty busy for several years looking after this work. He had a half-brother, J.P. Williams, who came and assisted in the work. Both he and Mr. Singleton were typical southern gentlemen and were much respected by all.

There was a family named Black, mighty fine English people, located up in that country. Besides the parents there were two sons, "Tom" and "Jim," also two daughters, a Miss Anna, who married a jeweler and located in Morocco. I think

the other daughter married J.P. Williams and several years later went to Chicago to live. Mr. Williams was connected with the stock yards, and is yet if he has not passed away, and I have never heard of him doing so. All the stock farmers around Momence have dealt more or less with and through him in the yards; even a small fry like myself have bought several carloads of sheep and two of cattle through him and it proved very satisfactory. He had two or three children. His oldest son was a mighty fine boy or rather young man. I don't know what ever became of him.

There was a Mr. and Mrs. Mumm, two sons and two daughters, also residing up in that section and they took quote a part in the draining of the marsh lands. All of their groceries, dry goods and other supplies were bought in Momence. When I first commenced to clerk in the general store in the old stone building, where Texaco oil station now stands, I helped put up hundreds of dollars' worth of goods that went up into this country. They took it away by the wagon load; quite a God's blessing to Momence in those early days.

Now coming back to Mr. John Woore's place-east of him is a large farm of the Johnson brothers, who have lived there a long time. North of them is the home of one of the Smith's. Now going back to the Walsh railroad and turning north on the east side of the tracks used to belong to T. J. Buntain, some hay land, and his home farm on the west side, one mighty good piece of land and well improved. West of the railroad on the south side of the road is located the old Peter Larsen farm, now occupied by his sons. Next west come the old Enos Van Kirk home farm, now owned by the Tabler estate. Next west is the farm that was owned by the late Clay Buntain. Going back north of the late T.J. Buntain home farm comes one of the late Perry Stratton, now owned by the Kirby and Brassard estates, also on belonging to Enos Novak, and one that did belong to the late Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Wikstrom, where Nels Christjansen once lived, also a farm owned by the Ed Chipman estate, where Frank Bydalek used to live. Going west of T.J. Buntain farm we come to the Van Kirk farm, occupied several years by William Raetz, west of this is the home of the late "Sam" Nichols, now the home of their son, Thomas, and his sister, Cora; neither of the children married. North of this comes the Bellinger farm, now the property of Mrs. C.M.C. Buntain of Momence. Then



comes the old home farm of the late William Stratton, who lived there many years, being one of the first farmers in this section. Their family consisted of four daughters, Deal, who married a Mr. E.A. Wikstrom of Stockholm, Sweden; Ellen, who married Mr. Hannibal Worcester, a banker; Mary, who married Dr. Hewett and went west; and Lotta, who married a Mr. Critchett, a railroad man; also two sons, one died while quite young, and T.H., who married a Miss Wilcox and who once operated a general merchandise store in the old stone building that stood for years on the corner of Range, now Dixie Highway and River Streets; selling out a one-half interest later to the late F. Hamilton, later selling out to the late J.A. Ransom, who built the brick store building later known as "Daylight Corner," now owned by Charles Hack. Mr. Stratton went to Lincoln, Nebraska later and embarked in the lumber business, several years later sold out and retired; now lives in Oakland, California. His son, Axel, called on me about a year ago, and made me a nice visit. (I was his first clerk and he was my first employer 50 some years ago.) William Stratton was the first man in this part of the county to have a real sowing machine. He was also the first and only man in this part of the country to own and have a "Buffalo Cow," and when they butchered it we had a nice steak. This farm, after their parents passed, became the property of the late E.A. Wikstrom, who built one of the finest and most up-to-date farm residences, and one of the largest and best barns and other buildings in the country. The grounds were laid out by a landscape gardener at the expense of \$20.00 a day. After her death the place was sold to Mr. Chatfield. Coming back to the corner west of the Clay Buntain farm and across the road west, is a place that used to belong to the late Eno Van Kirk, and later became the property of one of his grandsons. North of that is the fine old farm and home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Graham, who raised a large family of children. There were five girls, Libby, who married Fred Knighthart; Mary, who married and went west; one married Marcus Hunter; one married Argale Nichols of Kankakee; Isabella married a Mr. Blakeley; all have passed. Five sons, William, who married Josephine Brassard and lived in Momence all their lives; Charles, who married Emma Burns, and lived here all their lives; John, who married Lucy Crane, and lived on the farm all his life; Clarence, who married and died shortly after, Glover, who married Sadie Simpkins of Iowa, and had on son

Edson, who is now owner of his grandparents' farm, left to him by his father and uncle, John.

North of this is located the John Nichols farm, who left it to a foster son, Frank Yates, who now resides thereon. Next north is the Nagle farm; north of this is part of the Bellinger farm across the road then comes a private road running west to what use to be the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Nathania Drayer for years; they lived in a log house, two story, and a lean to. I have slept in that old house many times. They had two daughters, Lora, who married a man named Wilson, and Deal, who married a William Lewis; one son, Bert, who married and moved to Iowa. The old folks sold the place to the late Mr. and Mrs. George Demack. They, Mr. and Mrs. Demack, had two daughters, Matilda, who married Joseph Novak, and the other one married Joseph F. Bydalek and they lived on the Bellinger farm for a number of years, but now live near Exline. There are six sons: Harry married Elizabeth Gelino and lives in Valparaiso, Ind.; George lives with Mr. and Mrs. Novak; Joe, Mike, John and Theodore live on the home farm. They are still in the market I think. The place east of this did belong to Nels Christjansen. Farther north is the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Wilson. They have a large old stone house that is an old land mark on the old Vincennes Trail. Farther down and on the east side of the road, nearly under the fence, is one of the old mile stones cut out of a light yellow sandstone that marked the old Vincennes road. This milestone is across the road east of the John Nichols farm house. Some distance north of the John Wilson home is the old farm of the late Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, parents of Mr. Jesse Wilson, who still lives on the old home place and operates the farm. This house used to be a roadhouse or tavern many years ago. I have been in the house several times, but never had time to count all the rooms. The house is so large and covers so much ground that they built the barn, granary and even the garage on the other side of the road, but it isn't a bad place to go and everyone enjoys to visit Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Wilson and Betty Ann.

Coming back to the old C.M. & G. railroad going north we come to the home of the late Henry Van Kirk years ago. There used to be a large cheese factory just about where the depot is now and they hauled milk from every direction into the factory which did lots of business for a time, finally going to the bad and the

building stood idle for a time; later Leonard Bradley's folks came out here from Canada and he rented it and operated it for a while, made some mighty fine cheese, but somehow it took fire and burned to the ground. North of this land lies the "Sam" Chamberlain old place, formerly the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Fender. Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain raised their family here-two daughters, Emma, who passed away when a young lady; a younger sister, Nancy, I think, died in California; Fred, John and Will live near Bakersfield California; Amos lives on the old home place; Merrill lives in Kankakee and is in the real estate business; Rufus still lives in Momence.

North of this comes the farm of the late F.X. Longpre, but after the parents' death it became the property of Dr. Elmer Longpre, now Kankakee osteopath. Next place north was for many years the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Walter Chipman, who had three daughters, Alice, who married Henry Davis and lives on the south side; a sister married a Mr. Anderson; and Nellie, who died many years ago; Edward, who married Maude Sherwood, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arden Sherwood of Momence, and lives on his fine farm across the road from this old home where he was born; Will, who did live on the old home place for some time, is now manager of the South Shore Golf Course, he married Lottie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hess of Momence. On the northwest corner of the old house farm stand a red brick school called the "Chipman School." North of this is the home of the late Thomas Greenawalt, still occupied by his wife and three daughters. East of this comes the old home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Philander Hoag, which passed out of the family several years ago. North of this is the farm homestead of Mr. and Mrs. John Paradis, formerly the home of Mrs. Paradis' parents; then comes the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Deacon Randall, who raised two sons, George and John, who settled in the west; they also had a foster daughter, Mrs. Etta St. John. After Mr. Randall passed the farm was sold and Mrs. Randall came to town to live. Next comes the Union Corners Cemetery. Farther north comes the nice home of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Morrison. After they retired, I think it was sold to a Mr. Harris, who still owns it. Some distance up the road and part on both sides of same, used to be the property of the late Mr. and Mrs. Byron McKinstry, parents of the late "Dave" McKinstry of Kankakee. Mr. McKinstry was quite a

stock raiser dealing mostly in shorthorn cattle and sheep and was also quite an enthusiast in the nursery business, being the first and only nursery owner in this section for many years. They had two sons and three daughters; the parents and David are now deceased and the property has gone out of the family.

Mr. and Mrs. Morrison never had any children of their own but reared three or four, among whom was an Indian boy, who when he was about 18, came to Momence and went to school. He was a large and very quiet-used to sit and study and would pinch his throat with his right hand until it would almost choke him, his name was George Shaw. A year or so later he went away and never was heard of again. Mr. and Mrs. Morrison were both fond of children. She was a sister to the late George Simonds of Momence.

This ends the history of Momence and vicinity. I don't doubt but what I have made some mistakes, but I have tried to do my part in keeping with the hundredth anniversary and festivities of our little city of Momence, and the many kind words, sentiments and beautiful birthday cards and greetings I have and am still receiving, makes me feel that my efforts have not been in vain, and I therefore take this opportunity to thank you one and all for your kindnesses.

Here is part of a letter from a friend in Chicago, written Sept22: "Mr. Walter Brown, our California friend. Thanks for the Momence Progress duly received. I have read, with pleasure, your reminiscences of life and history of the remarkable "old home place," and in words of Old Rip Van Winkle, "here's to your health and your family's good health, and may you live long and prosper-and write folks up again."

If these good wishes work out all right after about 26 years more I ought to have pretty easy sailing, as they claim the first 100 years are the hardest, but I don't think I would enjoy writing up the folks for the next centennial celebration for I have got so lonesome writing about so many old friends and dear ones all gone, that it makes me feel that I am only one of a very few that are left of my old friends and schoolmates. The following will come near telling the story"

I wondered to the village Tom,

I sat beneath the beach trees leafy shade, which sheltered you and me.  
Upon the school house ground where once we played.  
But, none were left to greet me Tom; and few of our old class were left to know.  
That played with us upon the green some forty years ago.  
But, the same old bricks are in the wall.  
The bell swings to and frow,  
Its music just as sweet, dear Tom, as forty years ago.  
The grape vine swing is ruined now.  
Where once we played the beau.  
And swung our sweethearts, pretty girls, forty years ago.  
The master sleeps beneath the hill, which coated oe'er with snow  
Afforded us a sliding place forty years ago

WALTER A. BROWN

